Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims:

1-8 (canceled).

9 (Currently amended). A method of post processing a decompressed image comprising the steps of:

(a)   selecting a block of image pixels for filtering as a function of a quantization parameter and a quantization parameter threshold;

(b)   detecting an approximate direction of an image edge in a block of image pixels and establishing a filtering axis relatively parallel to said direction, wherein the step of establishing a filtering axis relatively parallel to an image edge in said block comprises the steps of:

(i)   designating a plurality of candidate axes;

(ii)   identifying a first pixel and a second pixel located on a projection parallel to a candidate axis, said first pixel located in a vicinity of a first boundary of said block and said second pixel located in a vicinity of a second boundary;

(iii)   determining a difference between said first pixel and said second pixel;

(iv)   repeating steps (ii) and (iii) for said plurality of candidate axes; and

(v)   identifying as said filtering axis said candidate axis corresponding to a function of a minimum difference between said first and said second pixels;

(c)   identifying a filtering segment comprising a plurality of contiguous pixels arrayed substantially parallel to said filtering axis and intersected by a boundary of said block;

(d)   selectively filtering said pixels of said filtering segment.

10 (canceled).

11 (Original). The method of claim 9 comprising the further step of designating said filtering segment subject to filtering if a pair of pixels of said filtering segment adjacent to said boundary satisfies a predetermined relationship to a threshold.

12 (Original). The method of claim 11 wherein the step of designating said filtering segment subject to filtering a pair of pixels of said filtering segment adjacent to a boundary of said block satisfies a predetermined relationship to a threshold comprises the steps of:

(a)   comparing a difference between said pair of pixels to an upper boundary threshold; and

(b)   comparing said difference between said pair of pixels to a lower boundary threshold.

13 (Original). The method of claim 12 wherein said lower boundary threshold is a function of a quantization parameter for said block.

14 (Original). The method of claim 9 comprising the further steps of:

(a)   designating at least one pixel on each side of said boundary as a filtering range; and

(b)   filtering said pixels of said filtering range.

15 (Original). The method of claim 14 wherein the step of designating at least one pixel on each side of said boundary as a filtering range comprises the steps of:

    (a)   selecting a pixel of said filtering segment adjacent to said boundary for inclusion in said filtering range; and

    (b)   successively including in said filtering range a next contiguous pixel until a difference between a last pixel included in said filtering range and said next contiguous pixel exceeds a continuity threshold.

16 (Original). The method of claim 15 wherein said continuity threshold is a function of a quantization parameter for said block.

17 (Original). The method of claim 15 wherein said continuity threshold is a function of a difference between a first pixel located in a vicinity of a first boundary of said block and a second pixel located in a vicinity of an opposing second boundary of said block.

18 (Original). A method of post processing a decompressed image comprising the steps of:

    (a)   identifying a block of image pixels defined by a block boundary;

    (b)   comparing a quantization parameter applicable to said block to a threshold quantization parameter;

    (c)   selecting a pixel pair arrayed on each of a plurality of projections parallel to a plurality of candidate filtering axes, if said block quantization parameter exceeds said threshold quantization parameter;

    (d)   summing the mean difference between pixels of said pixel pair for each of said plurality of projections for each of said candidate filtering axes;

    (e)   selecting said candidate filtering axis corresponding to a least of said sum of said difference between pixels of said pixel pair as a filtering axis;

(f)   identifying a filtering segment comprising a plurality of filtering segment pixels arrayed in a direction parallel to said filtering axis;

(g)   identifying a filtering range comprising at least one said filtering segment pixel on each side of said block boundary; and

(h)   filtering said filtering segment pixels of said filtering range to smooth said decompressed image.

19 (Original). The method of claim 18 further comprising the steps of:

(a)   comparing a difference between pixels of a contiguous filtering segment pixel pair to a continuity threshold;

(b)   repeating step (a) for filtering segment pixel pairs located successively more remote from said block boundary until said difference exceeds said continuity threshold; and

(c)   limiting said filtering range to an array of successively more remote filtering segment pixels on each side of said block boundary; each pixel being a member of a filtering segment pixel pair characterized by said difference being less said continuity threshold.

20-28 (canceled).

28 (Previously presented). A method of post processing a decompressed image comprising the steps of:

(a)   selecting a block of image pixels for filtering as a function of a quantization parameter and a quantization parameter threshold;

(b)   establishing a filtering axis relatively parallel to an image edge in said block wherein the step of establishing a filtering axis relatively parallel to an image edge in said block in said block comprises the steps of:

(i)   designating a plurality of candidate axes;

      (ii)   identifying a first pixel and a second pixel located on a projection parallel to a candidate axis, said first pixel located in a vicinity of a first boundary of said block and said second pixel located in a vicinity of a second boundary;

      (iii)   determining a difference between said first pixel and said second pixel;

      (iv)   repeating steps (ii) and (iii) for said plurality of candidate axes; and

      (v)   identifying as said filtering axis said candidate axis corresponding to a function of a minimum difference between said first and said second pixels;

(c)   identifying a filtering segment comprising a plurality of contiguous pixels arrayed substantially parallel to said filtering axis and intersected by a boundary of said block; and

(d)   selectively filtering said pixels of said filtering segment.

29 (Previously presented). A method of post processing a decompressed image comprising the steps of:

(a)   selecting a block of image pixels for filtering as a function of a quantization parameter and a quantization parameter threshold;

(b)   establishing a filtering axis relatively parallel to an image edge in said block;

(c)   identifying a filtering segment comprising a plurality of contiguous pixels arrayed substantially parallel to said filtering axis and intersected by a boundary of said block; and

(d)   selectively filtering said pixels of said filtering segment;

(e)   designating at least one pixel on each side of said boundary as a filtering range wherein the step of designating at least one pixel on

each side of said boundary as a filtering range comprises the steps of:

(i)   selecting a pixel of said filtering segment adjacent to said boundary for inclusion in said filtering range; and

(ii)   successively including in said filtering range a next contiguous pixel until a difference between a last pixel included in said filtering range and said next contiguous pixel exceeds a continuity threshold.; and

(f)   filtering said pixels of said filtering range.

30 (Previously presented). The method of claim 29 wherein said continuity threshold is a function of a quantization parameter for said block.

31 (Previously presented). The method of claim 29 wherein said continuity threshold is a function of a difference between a first pixel located in a vicinity of a first boundary of said block and a second pixel located in a vicinity of an opposing second boundary of said block.